

Working with Your Utility Company

Utility companies are well known entities with a local flavor that reach a large number of area consumers on a regular basis. One way to encourage people to test their homes for radon might be a well-timed information mailer delivered via your local utility company bill. National Radon Action Week is in October, which is an excellent time to inform residents about radon as they prepare their homes for the winter. Below are some ideas on how to work with your local utility company to arrange for a radon bill-stuffer.

General Tips for Working with Your Utility Company

- < When designing the bill stuffer, use the effective messages cited in the document in this supplement entitled “Key Points for Spokespersons.” Also, include a source (your organization) for more information on radon somewhere in the text of the stuffer.
- < Help design a bill stuffer that is consistent with the style of the utility company's past bill stuffers and have it read as a message from the utility company to its customers.
- < Ideally, the stuffer would fit into the envelope without having to be folded and would not increase the postage of the overall mailing. With this in mind, keep the wording concise.
- < Work with a local printer to get the printing done at a reduced cost if the utility company does not offer to cover printing costs.
- < See the “Sample letter to Utility Company” after this page.
- < In the event that the utility company is not willing to sponsor a bill stuffer, suggest that they print a special National Radon Action Week message on the bills they send out in the fall. The message might read something like:

“Keep heat in and radon out this winter! Test your home for radon during National Radon Action Week, October **[dates]**. Call **[number]** for more information on radon.”

Remind the utility company that providing such a public service message is one way to show their customers that they care.
- < Another idea is to have the utility company include a short blurb about radon or National Radon Action Week in the regular customer newsletter that many utility companies publish.

Sample Letter to Utility Company

Dear **[Director of Community/Public Relations]**

I am writing to request your participation in a National Radon Action Week activity that will ultimately help you to protect families in your community from the health risks posed by radon. National Radon Action Week kicks off with a Presidential Message from the White House asking Americans to take preventative action on this health risk. The purpose of the week is to draw attention to radon as a serious public health issue and, more importantly, to motivate Americans to take action to protect themselves from radon health effects. It is a health hazard that is present in elevated levels in about **[X]**% of **[area]** homes, which compares with over 6% of homes across all of America. Radon is a naturally occurring, invisible, odorless gas that is harmlessly dispersed in outdoor air, but when trapped in buildings, can be harmful at elevated levels. The science on radon has been formidable over the years, but never before have we had such overwhelming scientific consensus and robust data to support that exposure to elevated levels of radon causes lung cancer in humans.

In February of this year, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) presented the findings of their Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation (BEIR) VI Report: "The Health Effects of Exposure to Indoor Radon." This new report by the NAS is the most definitive accumulation of scientific data on indoor radon. The report confirms that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. and that it is a serious public health problem. The NAS concluded that radon causes between 15,000 and 22,000 lung cancer deaths each year.

We would like to explore your interest in providing a printed message in your customers' **[specify months]** bills about the pressing need for them to test their homes. As the cold weather approaches and your customers begin to winterize their homes, we would like to encourage them to keep the heat in and the radon out.

[Your organization] believes that **[utility company]** can make a real difference in protecting public health. We will be certain to publicize your support and are confident that this effort will go far toward building goodwill among your customers. **[Your organization]** will provide all the information needed for a small bill stuffer to be included in your **[months]** mailing. Please also feel free to include our phone number on the bill stuffer as a source of additional information on radon.

We will be in touch during the week of **[date]** to answer any questions you may have and to determine your interest in participating in this activity.

Thank you for your consideration of this serious public health issue.

Sincerely, **[your name and title]**